

Library of Birmingham Archives & Collections

POLICE RECORDS

The Metropolitan Police Act 1829, established a police force in London, and was followed by the County Police Act in 1839, which allowed Justices of the Peace to set up local authority funded county police forces. In 1856 the County and Borough Act made police forces mandatory in all counties and boroughs. Prior to the Police Acts, policing was the responsibility of the parish constable, an unpaid officer of the parish, who organised the Watch and Ward, the body of men who were appointed to watch over the parish, take charge of wrong-doers and deliver them to the appropriate court.

With the charter that incorporated the Borough of Birmingham in 1839 came the authority to set up a police force. However, as a result of legal wrangling, the force was not actually set up until 1842, and during the chartist riots of 1839, metropolitan police officers had to be dispatched from London to quell the riots.

Records relating to police officers and the administration of justice are still held by the police at the West Midlands Police Museum.

<http://www.westmidlandspolicemuseum.co.uk/>

Records relating to the Police in Birmingham City Archives:

661859 [ZZ334]	Birmingham Parish Constables' Accounts	1778-1842
BCC/1/AC	Birmingham City Council Watch Committee minute books (largely administrative)	1842-1974
MS 659	Police notebooks	1939-1942
MS 774	Two photographs of policemen	c.1900-1918
WK/B11/5178-5208 WK/B11/7890-7960	Assorted photos of police from various dates.	20 th Century

Note: SOME COUNCIL RECORDS ARE CLOSED FOR UP TO 100 YEARS
See Archive staff for details on access to these records

Records relating to the Police in Local Studies and History:

LF 41.9	City of Birmingham Watch Committee Register of portraits and descriptions of habitual drunkards	1903-1906
L 42.21	Birmingham Police Centenary – a history of the formation and present organisation of the force by C.C.H. Moriarty	1939